

CLAIMS

5 1. A video signal process comprising the steps of analysing a video signal and taking compression coding decisions; forming a representation of the coding decisions for passage with the video signal along a video pathway and downstream of the video pathway compression encoding the video signal in accordance with said coding decisions.

10 2. A process according to Claim 1 wherein said representation of the coding decision comprises an information bus in which the coding decisions are represented in the same format as they are represented in the compressed bitstream which is the output of said downstream compression coding operation.

15 a 3. A process according to Claim 1 or Claim 2, wherein said analysis generates information relating to picture size and type.

20 a 4. A process according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ ^{CLAIM V}, wherein said analysis comprises the generation of candidate motion vectors.

25 5. A process according to Claim 4, wherein said analysis comprises the selection for each macroblock of the picture of a motion vector from said candidate motion vectors.

6. A process according to Claim 5, in which said analysis comprises the selection of a macroblock prediction mode.

30 a 7. A process according to ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ ^{CLAIM VI} wherein said analysis includes a bit rate control and the taking of quantizer decisions appropriate to the maintenance of the selected bit rate.

8. A process according to Claim 5 wherein plural bit rates are selected and plural quantizer decisions taken.

9. Compression pre-processing apparatus, comprising means for analysing a video signal and taking compression coding decisions; means for processing the coding decisions and means for outputting the processed coding decisions for passage with the video signal along a video pathway.

10. Apparatus according to Claim 9, wherein said means for processing the coding decisions provides a representation of the coding decisions in the form of an compressed video bit stream lacking transform coefficients.

11. Apparatus according to Claim 9, wherein said means for outputting the processed coding decisions serves to modulate one or more least significant bits of the video signal.